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ABSTRACT

This publication reviews issues and processes in the quest for less-biased, least-biased, non-biased assessment. It is intended to aid the school psychologist in assisting all individuals in placement or program decisions for school-age children. The first section articulates the common sources of bias in assessment and identifies concepts intended to minimize bias in the use of individual and group tests. The second section gives the technique of observation its appropriate status as an assessment tool. The next section presents some of the more frequently-used assessment models. The final section describes follow-up as the final cost-effective step in non-biased assessment. (PN)

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NONBIASED PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT: 1983

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Foreword

This publication reviews issues and processes that must be considered in the quest for less-biased, least-biased, nonbiased assessment. It was prepared by Esther Axt Zinoman. Acknowledgement is gratefully made to the many school psychologists in the field who assisted, and to David Irvine and to Deborah Cunningham, colleagues within the State Education Department, for their assistance in the preparation of this publication.

Introduction

Description of Publication and Intended Audience

This publication is intended to aid the school psychologist in assisting all individuals involved in placement or program decisions for school-age children. The first section articulates the common sources of bias in assessment and identifies concepts intended to minimize bias in the use of individual and group tests. The second section gives the technique of observation its appropriate status as an assessment tool. The next section describes some of the more frequently used assessment models. The final section describes follow-up as the final, cost-effective, efficient step in nonbiased assessment.

Whenever scores are involved, especially when scores alone are used, the role that judgment plays is crucial. Scores are useful in making decisions about students, but using scores alone does not lead to reliable decision-making. Since judgment is involved in all educational decisions, the knowledge of experienced, competent school personnel is important in the assessment and decision-making process. Tests and other assessment devices are but tools in the hands of professionals. These assessment devices are only as good as the people who choose, use, and interpret them.

Bias may be found in every process involved in assessment including referral, screening, evaluation, intervention, placement, and follow-up. Bias can easily affect parental perceptions, home-school and in-school communication, language usage, test-taking skills, examiner-student interaction characteristics, sources of information for decision-making, choice of tests or tools for gathering information, curriculum and instruction, interpretation of behavior and scores, intervention choices, and school policies and practices. Given the state of the art, what are reasonable cautions concerning bias?

Caveats on Bias

1) The best assessment that probably can be done now is least-biased assessment. There probably will never be totally nonbiased assessment.

2) No matter how good the assessment tools are, it is the person who uses and interprets them who determines the quality of the product itself.

3) Reliability of observation can be improved by multiple observations of similar behavior (several people observing the same behavior, as well as several observations of behavior).

4) Working independently may result in biased interpretation and decision-making.

5) Usually, judgment of the characteristics of learning disorders and interpersonal dysfunction is improved by training and experience.

6) Versatility in selection and use of the assessment tools is a key to efficient and appropriate nonbiased assessment. "The required battery" of tests is not always appropriate. A large battery of tests from which to choose is always appropriate.

7) A "preventive" referral may appropriately call for a nontest-based assessment, the development of a tutorial program, and perhaps the training of a teacher aide or volunteer to help a child with a specific academic problem.

8) When a learning disability is suspected, the examiner must rule out cultural, mental, physical, or emotional causes for the behavior in question. That process, of necessity, takes all the skill and judgment of an experienced school psychologist.

9) Given the state of the art, a decision must be made about what represents a reasonable amount of evidence to support recommendations for development of appropriate alternative

educational strategies for the referred child. If enough information cannot be reported because of the absence of adequate quality data, pressures of the job, or inadequate resources, that must be indicated in the written report.

10) Decision-makers must maintain high levels of awareness of the reliability and validity of the instruments used. They must also be aware of the limitations of test scores used.

11) Test data and professional observations about test performance need to be examined for what they indicate about what the student learns, how she/he learns it best (i.e., preferred methodology), and the environment that best enhances his/her learning (i.e., personality of teacher, size of class, class management techniques, curricular materials, presentation method).

12) Errors of measurement and the limitations suggested by correlation coefficients and other commonly used statistics need to be defined and understood, as does their application to discussions of test scores.

13) Follow-up needs to be a routine part of assessment. In the case of the handicapped student, yearly evaluation of Individual Evaluation Programs (IEP) is a step in the right direction. The focus however must be on what is happening in the classroom. An assessment of the adequacy of specific classroom recommendations needs to be made in a timely fashion. When a student is responding to the recommended changes, it needs to be determined whether further help is needed. If different strategies are needed, they should be developed.

School psychologists must avoid becoming mired in the routine of examining for the purpose of obtaining scores. Their skills are better focused on evaluation for the purpose of developing interventions. The

job of school psychology is to help teachers and parents help children to function better in school. School psychologists as specialists in the psychology of learning, thinking, and feeling need to focus on the "kid" instead of the "kit."

Sources of Bias in the Assessment Process

Definition of Bias

A quality nonbiased assessment is one that eliminates, minimizes, or at least recognizes the presence of biasing conditions. Bias can be observed in procedures or actions that prevent or obscure full and accurate appraisal of conditions impeding a child's normal development. Bias can be introduced by the child, the parent, the examiner and other school professionals, or through school policies and/or the model of assessment accepted in the district.

Sources of Bias in the Assessment Process

Certain characteristics of children, if not properly identified and evaluated, will bias assessment results and interpretation. These include the child's ability to understand and communicate in English, knowledge of test-taking skills and strategies, his/her anxiety and desire to do well, and the child's cultural training for the experiences involved in assessment in public education.

The examiner must be aware of his/her personal characteristics that tend to increase bias in assessment. Attitudes of the examiner toward compliance, conformity, brightness, shyness, dullness, anxiety, uninvolvement, color, race, sex, socioeconomic status, or handicapping condition can affect interaction and test results. An examiner's need for job security, to be seen as competent, or to fulfill other responsibilities and ego images can affect the involvement and quality of the examination.

Parents may also bias assessment by giving inaccurate information, by being unwilling or unable to share information or time, by encouraging activities that are not in the best interests of the child, by lacking trust in or understanding of the role of the school, or by being unaware of their own needs in relation to the needs of the child.

The diagnostic intervention process may also be biased. When a student is referred, bias may already be present. The referring problem may be described

inaccurately, school expectations may exceed the ability of the student or be antagonistic to the student's cultural expectations. In a group situation, valuable skills and attitudes may be devalued or overlooked.

Such biases are minimized when the best available assessment techniques and resources are used. These include structured and unstructured interviews with children, teachers and family members, observational data, records, formal and informal assessment measures, and criterion and norm-referenced assessment measures.

Interpretation of information received requires sensitivity to the biases of standards (i. e., perfection, potential, or average) and knowledge of the technical limitations and strengths of assessment tools. Inappropriate use of assessment results produces a false information base that, if used to develop intervention strategies, will yield inconsistent, nonproductive results. It is important that the information base include descriptions of various characteristics in a reliable, understandable way. Recommendations should be made by persons familiar with their outcomes in analogous situations. Interventions should address needed changes in the environment as well as in the child. Those persons responsible for the implementation of the intervention should be included in its development and should accept the responsibilities entailed in carrying out the day-to-day responsibilities associated with it.

Policies and practices of school districts may be a potential source of bias. Insufficient time alloted to assessment intervention or follow-up leads to inaccurate, biased treatment of children in need. Little written documentation of what changes have occurred and their impact on the child leads to minimal attention to intervention alterations that would improve effectiveness in a most efficient manner. The bases of a school district's commitment of financial and professional resources to nonbiased assessment are often complicated and difficult

to discern. To the degree that bureaucratic networks are insensitive to the individual needs of children, families, and communities, through deliberate action or benign neglect, bias will be increased. When administrators are comfortable working with minority group families, they encourage democratic decision-making, individual solutions to individual problems, and supportive relationships in problem-solving situations. Bias will be minimized when good interpersonal communication exists.

Sources of Bias in the Use of Statistical Concepts

Tests of academic aptitude are designed to predict success or failure in school. Poor performance on these tests indicates a need for some kind of interpretation and intervention. Justifying placement in any program solely on the basis of a test score is indefensible and biased. Such misuse of tests is not a function of the inadequacy of the test, but of the inadequacy of those who attribute more to a score than it is reasonably possible to do.

No one should use test scores for educational decisions unless he/she understands the risks and inaccuracies inherent in such use, or is willing to accept the judgment and interpretations of someone who does. Responsible reporting and use of standardized test scores require extensive knowledge, thorough understanding, and judicious use of the technical information found in the manual accompanying the test. School psychologists skilled in the appropriate use of test materials are well prepared to help other school personnel interpret test results wisely.

A discussion of statistical concepts is generally not enthusiastically received by those making use of test scores. Yet it is incumbent on any person who is involved in making least-biased educational decisions about children to know that scores cannot, and must not, be accepted at face value. No test score can be used fairly and intelligently without a knowledge of the test's reliability, validity,

standard error of measurement, and normative population. Equally essential, a person must know how the technical manual accompanying the test defines the construct being measured. If the discussion of these components is not clearly understood by all members of a decision-making group, then a professional who understands test structure should be available to explain the characteristics and limitations of tests under discussion.

School psychologists can assist persons who use test scores to make decisions about program and placement to understand and use such information. Ideally, all the caveats listed below must be considered concurrently when test scores are used as samples of behavior in decision making or in reporting to parents.

- The test purports to measure the construct as defined in the manual, and not a construct as defined by the user.
- Reliability is a group statistic derived from group administration and is an indication that, if the test were given again, students, as a group, would obtain the same score. Validity statistics are measures of relationships between the test being given and something else (e.g. either a test that measures the "same" construct, a future performance on some other test, or a performance level in a subject area).
- The child's score can be interpreted only in terms of the characteristics of the children who were in the sampling population. If the sampling population is not large or is not a true random sample of the population tested and does not represent the child being tested, validity limitations must be dealt with in that child's test score interpretation.
- The score a student receives should be regarded as a sample of one within a range of scores he/she could receive if tested repeatedly.
- Standard error of measurement is a number that must be applied to a test score to account for fluctuations in a child's performance.

- Standard error should be reported, and persons knowledgeable in its use (e.g. the school psychologist) should incorporate this concept in interpreting every score used. No single test score can adequately describe an individual except in an extremely limited context. Using a single score as though it were an absolute measure of an individual student's functioning without accompanying use of the standard error statistic is inappropriate. This often occurs when test scores are used as part of a selection process. A school which uses an arbitrary "cut-off score" for selecting students for a program without accounting for the standard error may be attributing a difference to the obtained scores of two students when, in fact, no real difference exists in their true scores. When the size of the standard error is known, a better informed judgement can be made about differences between students' scores. The most frequent use of group testing information is to reveal how the student compares to others who took the same test. School personnel can also use tests to ascertain how the student handles information which he/she has been taught, insofar as the questions on the test are a fair representation of the material taught in the school. Observation and reporting of the student's behavior during the test administration can provide information about the student in a given "standardized" situation.

The score, stanine, or percentile which the student receives allows a person to talk about the student as though the student holds a "place" along the score continuum of a large group of children which represents the population of which the student is a member. The validity of that assumption depends on:

- The standardization sample size of the test in question.

- How well the characteristics of the standardization sample represent the total population of which the student is a part, (i.e., socio-economic status, sex, environmental background).
- How strictly the examiner adhered to the instructions for test administration.
- How "motivated" the student was to obey the instructions.
- How well the student understood the instructions in the first place.
- How well the test measures what the test administrator thought the test was measuring. This information cannot be derived merely by inspection.

A test is a controlled sample of a child's behavior. A perceptive analysis of the data from any test or sample of a child's performance leads to hypotheses, based in theoretical models, that can be corroborated or rejected in the course of an extended examination of the child's performance. Such analysis is more useful than any score in providing an appropriate education for the child. Use of the test data and test performance characteristics helps to identify characteristics of language, learning, and interpersonal communication styles that have meaning for the classroom teacher. Ignorance of the appropriate use of such material diminishes the quality of a psychoeducational examination.

Nonbiased use of tests requires reporting limitations by those who are using scores and interpreting data. A knowledgeable, reliable interpretation of test data can be a valuable information source in developing educational strategies for individual children. Such analysis is based on the intelligence, knowledge, experience, and history of the reliability of the judgment of the professional using the data.

Models of Nonbiased Assessment

Introduction

During the last decade there has been an increased acknowledgement of the rights of children to least-biased assessment when their educational progress is unsatisfactory. Public Law 94-142 and part 200 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education of New York State are specific and detailed in their support of this concept.

As school districts seek to provide nonbiased assessment, many models of such assessment are emerging. Some model developers believe that least-biased assessment results when the school psychologist focuses exclusively on those behaviors in the classroom that cause concern. Others believe that least-biased assessment results from an analysis of all factors impinging on a child's school performance, whether they are found in the home, in the playground, within the child, or in the school. Hence, the views expressed in several models should be considered in the identification of the most effective and efficient nonbiased evaluation procedures.

Four-Step Model

Cromwell, Blashfield, and Strauss (1975) have advanced an assessment model adapted by the National School Psychology Inservice Training Network (Oakland, 1980). This model emphasizes four areas essential to the school psychological examination: history, present functioning, recommendations, and follow-up. History consists of those facets of a student's development including culture, sex, race, socioeconomic background, family, social interaction, and social-emotional development that are reflected in the student's classroom behavior. Present functioning is a composite picture of the student's current behavior as revealed through observations, interviews, formal and informal testing, review of records, and discussions with family and school personnel. Recommendations are

statements based on knowledge of the student's characteristics, home, community, school placement, teachers and other school personnel, and classroom materials and methods. Recommendations are reasoned suggestions for alterations in the environment designed to encourage the positive growth and development of the student being assessed.

The success of nonbiased assessment depends on the evaluation and adjustment of recommendations during the last phase of the assessment process, or follow-up. Many factors critical to the success of recommendations are related to the proposed and future interaction of factors not yet related at the time of recommendation, (i.e., student and new materials, student and new teacher, teacher and new materials, parent and recommended counseling). It is logical and necessary to examine these new interactions and to adjust those features that may impede anticipated progress. Only when the four phases are completed is the assessment completed.

Multi-Step Mode

Tucker (1977) proposes a multi-stepped system that includes initial referral, referral for personality and intellectual assessment, formal assessment, and placement. Initial referral decisions are chosen from regular classroom alternatives (i.e., alternative curricula or special group instruction). They are decided on by the classroom teacher in consultation with other school personnel and parents. Only when these methods have not been helpful is the student seen as possibly having a handicapping condition. When the student is evaluated at this point, the possibility exists of recommending an appropriate special education placement and program, should the handicapping condition be confirmed by non-biased assessment.

Tucker emphasizes the use of observational data to support the initial referral. The parents are involved from the beginning and help decide what steps

are to be taken. If an initial assessment is warranted, language dominance, educational, sensory, motor, and psycholinguistic data are gathered. Again parents are involved and strategies are recommended. If further information is needed, adaptive behavior, medical, and developmental data are collected. Again, appropriate strategies within the classroom are sought. If these strategies are inadequate, the psychoeducational assessment is completed with a personality study and assessment of intellectual abilities. The appropriateness of any strategies within the regular education structure is evaluated once more. If no regular education alternatives are appropriate, the parents and school personnel meet to determine what special education placement is needed, and a recommendation for special education is made.

Classroom-Based Models

Within the past decade, several psychologists and educators have proposed that nonbiased assessment focus almost exclusively on what happens within the classroom. These practitioners emphasize a need for an analysis of how the student is functioning within the classroom, and, more specifically, the student's interaction with the teacher, students, the subject matter, and the daily lessons in that classroom. This approach uses observation, analysis, and recommendations developed with teachers, parents, and/or the child. Improvement is often evidenced by a reduction in the number of unwanted specified behaviors and an increase in the number of desired specified behaviors.

Behavioral assessment approaches emphasize direct measurement of a sample of a student's behavior. It is helpful if the behavior can be observed in the context in which it normally occurs, because the influence of the environment is judged important in determining interventions. Self-reporting is important in this approach because the student's feelings, perceptions, reasoning processes, motor behavior, and use of time are major concerns.

Theories of behavior which focus on different variables determine what strategies of assessment and intervention will be employed. In general, behaviors are studied because they are dangerous or maladaptive. Maladaptive behaviors are identified. Programs to ameliorate them should result in long-term individual and social good. Increasing the probability of recurrence of adaptive behaviors is the goal of behavioral assessment. Recommendations are precise plans, including data collection schemes designed to insure the increase in adaptive behaviors.

Behavioral assessment appears most effective for improving performance in circumscribed and finite areas. There is often difficulty in generalizing improved performance to other situations or to other environments. However, properly used, it is an effective tool in psychoeducational assessment.

In curriculum-based or task-based assessment, an analysis of instructional tasks and materials, and the student's interaction with them, leads to recommendations about the style, difficulty and length of material, expected student behaviors, and teacher behaviors. In these models, the focus is on educational materials and methods that will lead to student success and the incorporation of those materials and methods in the classroom instructional program.

Learning and teaching can be evaluated in terms of the introductory phase, the process phase, the memory generalization phase, and the reinforcement phase. By describing and analyzing the actions, reactions, and interactions of student and teacher within the four phases of an instructional event, recommendations for more effective teaching can be made, regardless of setting (Gagne, 1973).

Curriculum-based assessment presupposes a knowledge of the scope and sequence of the curriculum. Through analysis of how the student is performing in his/her classroom as well as with the examiner, the examiner determines the quality and quantity of function and dysfunction. Knowledge of the continuity of

the curriculum, learning theory, and educational methods allows the school psychologist to help the teacher develop an individualized learning program directly related to the class's daily instructional program.

Task-based assessment presupposes a knowledge of the steps to mastery of a defined skill within a specified curriculum area. Breaking down a task into its component parts, or steps is labeled task analysis. Task analysis aids the school psychologist in isolating those steps in a complicated process that must be learned before task mastery is possible. This process is especially effective in remediating difficulty in mathematics, where a missing introduction of a key concept can lead to years of confusion and anxiety in solving mathematics problems.

Dynamic Assessment Model

A new application of the test-teach-test model of assessment is seen in the work of Reuven Feuerstein. Feuerstein's dynamic assessment involves the use of nonverbal tests, such as Ravens Progressive Matrices, to establish a student's functioning cognitive level. The student is helped to derive a methodology for solving the nonverbal problems with which he/she is having difficulty. The student then is required to apply the newly learned methodology to new, but similar, problems of increasing difficulty. The aim of the "dynamic assessment" is to provide evidence for a greater cognitive ability potential than the student usually evidences. Although the technique as used by Feuerstein is time consuming, adaptation of the methodology to assessment of classroom learning may be relevant and useful. There is a significant number of students for whom the more commonly used assessment devices are inappropriate. Assessment techniques, such as Feuerstein's, which stress cognitive thinking and minimize the understanding and/or the use of oral or written instructions in problem solving are useful with students of limited English proficiency as well as with retarded and gifted students.

Research

Well researched studies on the results of nonbiased assessment are few. Methodological difficulties are monumental. The more factors to be considered, the more difficult the evaluation. Limiting the focus of study produces neater results but limits generalizability to the behavior of the "whole" student or to other students in other settings. The research useful in university study is often not useful to public education. What the literature shows are trends, good ideas for interventions, and a reinforcement of one of our best instruments--individual judgment.

"Best" Model

The current state of the art in individual assessment suggests the best model is an individualized, flexible, eclectic model, used by an experienced school psychologist. Such a model allows for selection of instrumentation based on the needs of the student being evaluated, reports results in terms of the student's functioning in relation to the home and school environment, and assesses the results of the recommendations after they are implemented.

Observation: The Underused Tool in Nonbiased Assessment

Introduction

Formal observation of the student in the school and/or home environment is a powerful but underused tool in the school psychologist's examination. Frequently, lack of general appreciation for this useful skill has been supported by an uncritical reliance on test scores. Far from being a menial chore to be delegated indiscriminately, observation is a complicated process, best handled by a perceptive, experienced, well-trained professional. Although observation takes time, time is well rewarded by an enriched data base that improves the quality of the non-biased assessment.

Identifying Information in an Observation

When reporting an observation, certain information and procedures are necessary:

- o reason for observation
- o who is observing, and his/her relationship to the observed
- o who is observed with general identifying information
- o what is being observed, i.e., the focus of the observation
- o when the observation occurs--day, date, time of day, and duration
- o where the observation is taking place, (i.e., a description of the environment - especially those factors of the environment that seem related to the observed student's behavior)
- o use of noncritical, nonbiasing, descriptive language

Reliability and Validity of Observations

The reliability and validity of observations have frequently been cited as reasons for not using the observation technique. Reliability and validity can be established for observers and for observations by training all observers and by periodic review of groups of experienced observers. Training can consist of

defining and describing the same event and group evaluation of the obtained observations.

Anecdotal Records

The anecdotal record is a useful and well-accepted observation tool. An anecdotal record is a full description of an event that occurs in a defined, limited, or proscribed environment over a short period of time. It provides information about a total situation or a specific student's interaction with the environment. It is best recorded and reported by someone who is not directly involved in the situation described, although often the teacher is the only available recorder.

To insure good anecdotal recording, the observers' personal attributes must include vigilance, speed in recording, and accuracy of perception. The observers must become aware of their use of language and their biases toward the student and/or the environment. Typically each anecdotal entry is not long. A series of such entries, however, becomes a continuing record of a student's school performance, and can be focused as time and needs dictate.

Product Observation

Product observation involves description of a student's class work, homework, or records. Since products, unlike nonrecorded events, can be reexamined, the reliability of the observation can be checked and corroborated. This form of observation provides for flexibility in observer scheduling and efficient summarization of a series of events.

Observation for Behavior Modification

Behavior modification has led to an increase in use of several behavior-specific observation methods. These methods of observation are associated with the management of specific behaviors of individual students. Strategies are planned to encourage the recurrence of predefined desired behavior, or to diminish undesirable behavior. Observations help determine the scope and sequence of the

targeted behavior of specific individuals within specific groups. Frequency counting, duration counting, interval recording, or time sampling may be used for such purposes.

Frequency counting produces a sum of the times a specifically defined behavior occurs within a predetermined time period. Duration counting provides a measure of how long that behavior lasts each time it occurs. Time sampling gives information about the occurrence of specified behavior in predetermined time periods throughout the day.

A number of commercially prepared observation instruments provide categories and rating scales for various specific behaviors. Some of these instruments provide specific behavioral descriptions or encourage the development of unique behavioral descriptions for each student. Others provide time and sign (+, -) systems to allow charting the presence (+) or absence (-) of behavior along a time-line. These systems are sometimes easier for classroom teachers to use when they are also involved in group instruction. They also aid a neophyte observer who, relieved of the responsibility for writing behavioral descriptions, can concentrate on identifying, coding, and counting predefined behaviors.

The most difficult variables to describe in an observation are the affective variables. One person's anger can be another person's fury. When describing and enumerating incidences of social and emotional behaviors, it is crucial that all persons involved in the observation and its consequences be attributing the same characteristics to the same descriptor. In this instance, explicit behavioral descriptions are superior to short ambiguous summaries.

The informal and formal use of language is an important but frequently overlooked aspect in observation. Since it has been shown that the use of language is integrally associated with behavioral change (Meichenbaum, 1977), the receptive and expressive language skills of a student, as well as the student's informal and

formal language usage, are important behavioral characteristics to note during the observation. The language and communication patterns of the teacher and the student must be observed and interpreted in order to plan meaningful intervention strategies.

Observation of language development requires knowledge of normal language development, normal development specific to the home and cultural characteristics of the student in question, and experience with those nonverbal characteristics of language that can transmit a message more powerful than words. In this area, if one does not know what to look for, one can miss the message, and possibly overlook a pivotal variable in the success of an intervention strategy.

Follow-Up: The Cost-Effective Step in Nonbiased Assessment

Psychoeducational evaluation helps the school to provide a better educational program for the student, one that will assist that student to learn and progress in school. An individual psychological examination may be part of the work of a child study team, or it may represent the total information needed for changing a student's educational program. The examination should contain plans for following the student after recommendations are implemented. The educational program related to the recommendations should be subject to change based on changing conditions. We can never anticipate all the outcomes of all the interactions created by an educational intervention.

Detection of Error in Placement and Program

Error may be found within the assessment/placement process or result from unanticipated actions or reactions in the implementation of recommendations. There may be an inaccuracy in interpretations of assessment, in the breadth and scope of the evaluation or placement decision, in the anticipated rate of change of the student, or in the predictions of the efficacy of the interactions of those persons at home or school involved in the recommendations. Providing appropriate educational programs for children is a combination of best estimates from collected information as assessed by properly qualified professional educators and pupil services personnel, and it is, therefore, essential to determine if the recommended methods, programs, strategies, and interactions are working. If, after a reasonable amount of time, the student is progressing better than expected, or not as well as expected, the process of follow-up allows the practitioner to suggest alternatives to ameliorate unanticipated obstacles or to provide additional help. This can be the least expensive, most effective part of the examination.

In order to assure timely follow-up, an individual should be assigned to follow the child at the time the educational strategies are planned. Parents, school personnel and the child need to be contacted. Telephone calls, classroom observation, and informal meetings are effective communication tools for this often neglected assessment procedure.

The school psychologist is frequently assigned to follow the child to determine the effectiveness of placement or program changes. This is logical since school psychology training, experience, and job structure allow for development of trust and continuity in working with parents and teachers. Additionally, school psychologists can evaluate placement and programs in relation to the characteristics of varying disabilities. They can make valuable suggestions for alternative strategies as a result of their interaction with home and school.

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